

Stigma: a linguistic analysis of personality disorder in the UK popular press, 2008-2017.

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Ethical statement.

This study is based on publically available data and therefore did not require ethical review.

There are no conflicts of interest in relation to this study.

Abstract.

Introduction: Many people with a diagnosis of personality disorder experience stigma, and the press' representations may contribute to those processes. To date little is known about how the press write about people with personality disorder and analysis of language used is often limited to checklists of words to avoid.

Aim: The aim of the study was to explore the linguistic characteristics of press articles about personality disorder in popular tabloids in the UK and consider the implications for stigmatisation.

Method: Corpus linguistics was used to examine a 50% sample of all articles published by the popular press in the UK, from 2008 to 2017, that referred to personality disorder (n=260).

Results: The findings identified a range of words that constructed narratives of violence.

Discussion: The method enabled the findings to expand the current level of knowledge in the field, identifying patterns in the use of the language of violence, which may contribute to the processes of self-stigma.

Implications for Practice: Greater understanding of the messages in the press can sensitize nurses to common misconceptions about the disorder, how these may have become internalised and the need for psycho-social interventions to address the impact of self-stigma on self-esteem.

Keywords: stigma, media and mental health, personality disorders, language, social exclusion

RELEVANCE STATEMENT.

This study furthers our understanding of the processes of stigmatisation towards people with a diagnosis of personality disorder. Mental health nurses play a key part in the treatment that people with this diagnosis receive and therefore are well placed to address issues of stigma in terms of how people are treated, and psycho-social interventions to address the impact of self-stigma on self-esteem.

Accessible Summary:

What is known on the subject.

- People with a diagnosis of personality disorder often experience stigma both outside of, and within, mental health services.
- The media contribute to people's understanding of mental health issues, and negative portrayals appear to lead to increased negative attitudes in readers.
- Relatively little is known about how the press represent personality disorder and the types of messages that people with this disorder may be receiving, which may impact on their understanding of themselves and emotional wellbeing.

What the paper adds to existing knowledge.

- The key findings indicate that in a 10 year period, the representation of personality disorder in the popular tabloid press in the UK was characterised by the frequent use of language of violence.

- The research approach enabled the study to identify significant patterns in the language used, rather than only using a checklist of words that the press are directed to avoid.
- This adds to our understanding about the images repeatedly presented that may affect how readers treat people with a diagnosis of personality disorder and affect the self-esteem of those with the diagnosis.

What are the implications for practice.

- Mental health nurses are well placed to address issues of stigma both in terms of the general public's beliefs and the impact it has on those who use mental health services.
- A greater understanding of the messages in the press can help nurses to support service users who are vulnerable to believing that their lives will start to reflect the negative messages they have read.

Reporting checklist.

This study is co-relational in design and therefore the STROBE checklist for observational research has been drawn on for reporting.

1 INTRODUCTION.

People with a diagnosis of personality disorder are considered one of the most stigmatised groups within mental health services (Sheehan, Nieweglowski & Corrigan, 2016). This has included negative attitudes from some healthcare workers (Dickens, Lamont & Gray, 2016) and reports that some people with this diagnosis have had their distress dismissed (Bonnington & Rose, 2014), have been treated disrespectfully (Lawn & MacMahon, 2015) and treated as a label rather than an individual (Veysey, 2014). In the UK, this has meant that despite expansion in the provision of specialist services over the last 15 years (Dale et al, 2017), the lack of consistent high quality care has recently prompted a government sponsored consensus statement to improve treatment experiences (Lamb, Sibbald & Stirzaker, 2018).

The diagnostic category of personality disorder has often been disputed (Kendell, 2002) and there continues to be debates about how this disorder should be conceptualised (Newton-Howes, Clark, & Chanen, 2015). A common broad understanding is that individuals experience “an enduring pattern of inner experience and behaviour...(that) is pervasive and inflexible...is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment” (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2000, p685). This broad understanding undergirds the diagnostic criteria for different personality disorders, but this will include a heterogeneous range of human experiences, such as being socially and emotionally detached, or experiencing instability of relationships, or being submissive (APA, 2013). The pattern of behaviours linked to some personality disorder diagnostic criteria has led to examination of associated links with violence, particularly for antisocial personality disorder. A community study by Coid, Yang, Roberts et al. (2006) has indicated that incidence of violence for people who meet this criteria is 6.12 times higher than for the general population. The same study indicated that by contrast the incidence of violence amongst the broader group of people who met any diagnostic criteria for personality disorder was 2.3 times higher than the general population, which was lower than the incidence for people with an affective disorder or experiences of psychosis. A more recent review of global evidence has suggested that the incidence of violence amongst people who meet the criteria for a personality disorder is 1.6 to 2.3 times higher than the public (Samuels, 2011). Given the heterogeneity of diagnostic criteria it is perhaps not surprising that the public’s psychiatric literacy of discrete personality disorders appears to be very poor. Furnham and Dadabhoy’s (2012) study, for example, indicated that only 5% of participants accurately identified a case vignette as being representative of the criteria for borderline personality disorder, compared with 74% who accurately identified depression. In this context, the public may be particularly vulnerable to the messages in the media as a source of information about personality disorder as they may have few alternative and accurate sources of information.

The relationship between stereotypical beliefs, negative attitudes and discrimination is complex, however, the model of stigma provides a conceptual framework to understand these processes (Thornicroft, 2006). The contemporary model of stigma arises from the original work by Goffman (1963) who described the processes whereby stereotypical beliefs are used to understand individuals whose personal biographies include attributes that have been socially discredited. Goffman elaborated on the impact both on how people are treated and how they view themselves, stating that it can have “the effect of cutting him off from society and from himself so that he stands a discredited person facing an unaccepting world” (1963, p30). The original model has been elaborated by contemporary researchers, and arguably its most sophisticated model is Link and Phelan’s modified labelling theory (2001). In this model, for stigma to take place the label of the group (e.g. a diagnosis of personality disorder) is linked to negative stereotypes about their attributes (Link & Phelan, 2013). This can be seen, for example, when mental health nurses have categorised individuals as aggressive

as a result of their label of personality disorder, rather than their actual clinical characteristics or actual history of aggression (Newton-Howes, Weaver & Tyrer, 2008). For stigma to be enacted this involves prejudicial attitudes to lead to discriminatory behaviours (Thornicroft, 2006) such as distancing behaviours towards people with personality disorder (McGrath & Dowling, 2012). Negative attitudes have also been found to influence the construction of nursing care plans, and have been associated with care that only meets basic needs and safety rather than more individualised needs (Ma, Shih, Hsiao, Shih & Hayter, 2009). Stigma, is not only enacted towards groups, but also affects how people re-evaluate their identity in light of society's understandings about the group that they belong to. This is referred to as self-stigma (Corrigan, Rafacz & Rusch, 2011) and is associated with lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy (Corrigan & Rao, 2012), and has been found to impact on people with a diagnosis of personality disorder (Rusch, Lieb, Bohus & Corrigan, 2006).

The media both reflect society's understandings about mental health and play a role in how people understand mental disorders (Nairn, 2007). There is evidence of a direct impact of press stories about people with a diagnosed mental illness who have committed acts of violence, negatively affecting readers' attitudes (Corrigan, Powell & Michaels, 2013; McGinty, Webster & Barry, 2013; Wilson, Ballman & Buczek, 2016). Similarly, media reports have reduced the desire of people with mental health difficulties to seek out support from others, for fear of negative responses (Hoffner, Fujioka, Cohen & Seate, 2017).

It is of concern, therefore, that there has been a broad pattern, across the world, of press stories often themed around aggression and dangerousness (Bowen & Lovell, 2013). The UK press, across the sector, has been less likely to present stories about mental health and dangerousness than is found in some other countries, e.g. 22% of articles in the period 2008-2014 (Rhydderch et al., 2016) compared to 44% of articles in Japan (Ottewell, 2017), 47% in Canada (Whitley & Wang, 2017b) and 55% in the US (McGinty, Kennedy-Hendrick, Chosky & Barry, 2016). However, in the UK the term personality disorder has been found to be the diagnostic category most likely to be written about as bad news stories (Rhydderch et al., 2016; Goulden et al., 2011). In the UK a group of newspapers referred to as the red-top tabloid press are characterised by their red mastheads and compact size (Brook, 2007), their high readership (National Readership Survey, 2017) and tendency for sensationalistic reporting (Wynne-Jones, 2011). Amongst this group of newspapers, in the period 2001-2012, 42% of all articles that referenced personality disorder also made reference to homicide (Bowen, 2016).

The language used by the press when reporting about mental health has been a source of concern, with a range of press guidance within the UK advising against the use of pejorative language, such as '*psycho*', (Time to Change, 2018), as it may "create a climate of rejection" (Press Complaints Commission [PCC], 2014). Research suggests that the press have often adopted sensationalistic language when writing about mental health, such as '*deranged*' (Murphy, Fatoye & Wibberley, 2013), '*monster*' and '*lunatic*' (Carpiniello, Girau & Orru, 2007), '*maniac*' and '*psycho*' (Dickens, 2008). Further, there is evidence that the red-top tabloids have used this stigmatising language relatively frequently (Clement & Foster, 2008). This is significant as the red-top tabloids have high circulation within the UK, accounting for the most popular and third most commonly read newspapers (National Readership Survey, 2017). Existing studies have presented findings on the use of language when reporting about mental health as a broad issue rather than in discrete diagnostic categories (Rhydderch et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2013) or specific to the diagnostic category of schizophrenia (Clement & Foster, 2008). There are no studies, to the author's knowledge, that have specifically examined the language used by the red-top tabloids when writing about personality disorder, despite the evidence of high level of stigma experienced by this group.

1.1 Aims and objectives

The aim of this study was to explore the characteristics of the language used by the red-top tabloid press when writing about personality disorder, and to consider the implications for the stigmatisation of people with this diagnosis. The study used data generated through comprehensive searches of articles published by this group of newspapers over a ten year period. The data was analysed to identify language that may contribute to stigmatising messages about people with this diagnosis using corpus linguistics methods. The findings were considered in light of a modified labelling model of stigma and how the language may impact on how people are treated or may re-evaluate their self.

2 METHOD

2.1 Research method

This study used the research method of corpus linguistics, which in the field of linguistic analysis has been used to systematically examine bodies of text (Jones & Waller, 2015). Corpus linguistic is regarded as a method, or tool, rather than a methodology. It was originally developed by lexicographers, and remains a useful tool to examine the meaning of words as they are used in the real world (Bowker, 2018). It has also been used within studies that have been underpinned by a range of different methodologies, including discourse analysis (Baker, 2006) and frame analysis (Touri & Kostarella, 2017). The conceptual model of stigma employed in this study was Link and Phelan's (2001) modified labelling theory in which identity is understood as a socially constructed entity. Language is understood as an important component in the social construction of identity and Link and Phelan (2001) comment that the power that a social identity can have in defining an individual can be seen in examples of when a person is referred to as their diagnosis. They cite examples of people being referred to as being "schizophrenic", and in the context of this study a stark example would be referring to someone as, "a PD". Corpus linguistics as a method was utilised to identify patterns in the language used that may have contributed to stigmatising messages about the identity of someone with a diagnosis of personality disorder and ultimately how that may affect how someone with this diagnosis may be treated or re-evaluate their self.

The approach relies on the use of specialist software to analyse large datasets. This rigorous research method facilitates identification of patterns in the frequency of words used by comparing it against a baseline dataset. The software contrasts the relative frequency of every word in the dataset under analysis with the relative frequency of the same word in the comparator dataset. The analysis is supported through the use of appropriate statistical tests to determine whether the differences are significant. This form of analysis is referred to as keyness analysis (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2013). The analysis does not interrogate the comparator dataset, rather the latter is used as a touchstone to elucidate the qualities that are within the dataset under enquiry. The decision about the construction of the comparator dataset is important as it needs to be sufficiently similar and sufficiently different to draw out the pertinent linguistic characteristics of the dataset under examination (Baker, 2006). For this study a comparator dataset was constructed of articles produced by the same group of newspapers during the same time period that included the word diabetes or diabetic. Thus, the comparator dataset was differentiated only by an alternative physical health condition, to highlight linguistic qualities associated with a specific psychiatric diagnosis rather than physical health condition. Diabetes has been found productive as a comparator in other research examining media representations of mental health, which supported its use in this study (Koike, Yamaguchi, Ojio, Ohata & Ando, 2015).

This method has the advantage over the more commonly used approach in the field, of identifying the frequency of pre-determined lists of stigmatising words (Dickens, 2008; Murphy et al., 2013) as it may identify proportionally high frequency words that were unanticipated.

2.2 Dataset

For this study a dataset was constructed using the NexisLexus database, which is the industry standard for collecting articles produced by the newspaper industry (Baker et al., 2013). A dataset was constructed of all articles produced by the UK red-top tabloids (*The Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, *News of the World*, *Sunday Star*, *Sunday Mirror*, *The Sunday People*, *The Sunday Sun*), that included the word personality disorder(s) within the article. The time period chosen was from January 1st 2008 to December 31st 2017, this relatively long period was chosen as it would provide a comprehensive overview of the linguistic characteristics of news items about this group of articles. The initial dataset could be considered the population of articles in that period and it is typically considered to be not appropriate to use statistical tests with populations (Field, 2017). Therefore, a random sample of the population of all personality disorder articles was constructed. All articles were assigned a number and <https://www.random.org> was used to randomly generate a 50% sample of the population. This generated a sample of 260 articles, from the population of 520 articles produced across the 10 year period.

2.3 Data analysis

The computer software AntConc (Anthony v3.5.7, 2018) was used to support the analysis as this has been found to be reliable (Anthony, 2013) and is free to download. The AntConc software can apply the statistical test of Log-Likelihood (G^2), to compare two datasets, which is the industry standard for identifying significant patterns of differences in the proportional frequency of words. The analysis enabled all of the words in the personality disorder dataset to be rank ordered by their relative frequency, indicated by their Log-Likelihood value (G^2). At an alpha threshold of $p < 0.05$, a statistical value of 3.84 indicates statistical significance of relative frequency (<http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html>). A theoretically informed exploration of words with a G^2 value of 3.84 or greater was undertaken to identify language that may contribute to stigmatising images.

2.4 Ethical considerations

This study was based on publically available data and therefore did not require full ethical approval.

3 RESULTS

The first stage of the analysis was to examine the use of discrete personality disorder terms, to determine if further analysis could be undertaken of the press' representation of different diagnostic categories. The dataset was searched for the use of instances of all types of personality disorder in the *International Classification of Diseases* (10th ed.; ICD-10, World Health Organization [WHO], 1992) and the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013) and the number of articles that made reference to each term was identified. The results from this are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of articles that used unspecified or specific diagnostic terms.

Types of Personality Disorder.	No. of articles.
Not specified	194
Paranoid	7
Schizoid	1
Schizotypal	1
Antisocial	7
Dissocial	0
Borderline	35
Emotionally unstable	5
Histrionic	1
Narcissistic	12
Avoidant	2
Dependent	1
Obsessive-compulsive	0
Anakastic	0

*Note that some articles included references to more than one type of personality disorder hence the total in Table 1 is greater than 260 articles.

The analysis of the use of different diagnostic terms indicated that 75% of the articles made no reference to a specific personality disorder. This initial finding suggested that the dataset as a whole was contributing to an image of a generic personality disorder message that would be more dominant for readers in their application to understand any discrete personality disorder diagnosis. As a result a decision was made to analyse the dataset as a whole.

The dataset as a whole was analysed using corpus linguistic software to contrast the language use with the diabetes dataset. The analysis revealed a pattern within the press of language that contributes to images of violence. These words fell into four groups: acts of violence, descriptions of acts, implements of violence, identity labels (see table 2).

Table 2. Findings from the linguistic analysis, ordered by categories and rank ordered by Log-Likelihood value (G^2).

Acts of violence.			Description of acts.			Implements of violence.			Identity labels.		
Freq.	G^2	Word	Freq.	G^2	Word	Freq.	G^2	Word	Freq.	G^2	Word
129	124.31	murder	34	33.22	violence	57	52.99	knife	136	103.82	killer
93	97.71	killing	30	28.32	violent	18	24.26	crossbow	47	41	evil
96	65.49	killed	11	14.82	wicked	15	20.21	knives	22	29.65	killers
41	55.25	murders	10	13.47	deranged	13	17.52	blade	27	24.68	murderer
73	46.28	kill	9	12.13	disturbing	13	17.52	hammer	17	22.91	psycho
54	42.32	stabbed	9	12.13	ruthless	15	14.16	weapon	31	22.6	monster
35	30.45	murdering	27	10.16	horror	10	13.47	axe	12	16.17	cannibal
21	28.3	killings	19	10.05	horrific	13	11.74	gun	11	14.82	psychopaths
24	25.37	shot	7	9.43	callous	8	10.78	pistol	8	10.78	thug
28	19.32	murdered	7	9.43	crazed	7	9.43	weapons	17	10.28	fiend
18	17.85	stab	7	9.43	grotesque	9	7.05	guns	7	9.43	attacker
20	16.4	manslaughter	9	7.05	chilling	9	7.05	razor	7	9.43	maniac
11	14.82	homicide	5	6.74	brutally	5	6.74	scissors	7	9.43	monsters
11	14.82	knifed	5	6.74	depraved				7	9.43	psychos
18	14.1	attacked	4	5.39	frenzied				10	8.2	beast
25	13.78	rape	7	4.83	sickening				6	8.08	stalker
10	13.47	butchered	3	4.04	horrifying				5	6.74	brute
10	13.47	massacre	3	4.04	monstrous				8	5.93	rapist

20	13.42	shooting			3	4.04	fiends
9	12.13	slaying			3	4.04	slayer
8	10.78	knifing					
8	10.78	slaughter					
7	9.43	slashed					
120	9.29	death					
18	9.1	stabbing					
10	8.2	torture					
6	8.08	ripped					
9	7.05	strangled					
5	6.74	mutilated					
3	4.04	headbutted					
3	4.04	skinned					
3	4.04	sliced					
3	4.04	smashing					
3	4.04	stamped					
3	4.04	strangling					

Freq, frequency; G^2 , Log-Likelihood value

Words indicating acts of violence included frequent use of the words, *murder* (n=129), *death* (n=120), *killing* (n=93), *killed* (n=96) as a well as a range of more specific acts such as *stabbed* (n=54), *rape* (n=25), *torture* (n=10). The analysis indicated that the graphic impact of these acts was augmented by the use of language that emphasised the otherness of the behaviour, such as the use of the word horror, e.g. “horror attack” (Meneely, 2017, p17). The impact of these images was also amplified by the range of weapons that were described as being used. The most common was a reference to a *knife* (n=57), which corresponds to the high frequency of references to people being *stabbed* (n=54), however, it also included a range of weapons, which contributed to graphic images of violence, e.g. “The Crossbow Cannibal skinned his victims, chopped up their bodies and cooked and boiled them before gorging on their flesh” (Thornton, 2010, p24). In the context of these lurid images of violence it was relatively common that people were named through words that reduced them to an identity label, such as *killer* (n=136), *‘monster’* (n=31), *‘psycho’* (n=17) and *‘beast’* (n=10).

4 DISCUSSION.

Analysis of the language used by the press in accounts about mental health have typically focussed on the over use of words that are pejorative and have associations with mental health, such as ‘psycho’ and ‘deranged’ (Time to Change, 2018). This stems from an appropriate concern about negative, often violent, connotations that accompany some mental health language and how these can perpetuate negative stereotypes. This study has diverged from that approach and applied a method to analyse the dataset as a whole and identify language that may contribute to the processes of stigmatisation.

The analysis identified that the red-top tabloid press have repeatedly drawn on words they are advised to avoid, e.g. *‘psycho’* and *‘monster’*. Moreover, it revealed that they had used a range of words associated with violence, which are referred to in this study as the *linguistic signatures of violence*, which would construct images of violence linked to people with personality disorder. The power of these words would arise from both their repetition and from the relationships that exist between them. The analysis distinguished four categories of words that highlight elements of those relationships. Words naming acting of violence (e.g. *murder, killed, stabbed, shot*) would be amplified through sensationalistic language describing those acts (e.g. *wicked, deranged, horrific*) and through the repeated focus on the actual implements of violence (e.g. *knife, hammer, axe, gun*). This stark language, such as “deranged mum who stabbed her three kids to death” (Wilkie, 2011, p9) or “A monster who killed and raped” (Net date fiend, 2016), would encourage readers to construct vivid

images of violence, and powerful affective responses of horror and disgust, associated with people with a diagnosis of personality disorder.

It is important to bear in mind that research indicates that messages designed to induce fear in readers are associated with higher levels of processing activity (O’Keefe & Jensen, 2008) but reduced capacity for thinking through complex ideas (Altheide, 2006). Readers are consequently likely to be drawn into the web of the language of violence but less likely to contextualise the biographies of individuals. This would be amplified through the language of identity labels (e.g. ‘evil’, ‘psycho’, ‘monster’) that further encourage readers to reduce those biographies to a single attribute. This may play a role in the processes of stigmatisation as linking affective responses (e.g. fear) with stereotypical knowledge (e.g. dangerousness) leads to prejudicial attitudes, and experiencing individuals as ‘other’ (Link & Phelan, 2013). The latter phenomenon is believed to be central to people enacting discriminatory behaviours (Link & Phelan, 2013).

The power of the images constructed in this group of newspapers also arises through their resonance with wider cultural images of mental health and violence. This includes the images that are presented in other newspapers (Ma, 2017) but also images in films (Goodwin, 2014) and television (Whitley & Wang, 2017b). Collectively, these contribute to the socialisation of individuals to construct meanings about mental illness generally, and personality disorder more specifically. Repetitions of these images, across different media, have an amplificatory effect whereby they encourage readers to assume that this informal understanding is taken for granted knowledge (Nairn, 2007).

Whilst this study did not directly examine the impact that the articles had on individuals, the results can be considered in relation to the processes of stigmatisation. The repetition of images of violence in representing people with a diagnosis of personality disorder may well encourage individuals to adopt overly cautious behaviour in relation to this group of individuals, based on an unrealistic fear of threat of serious violence, coupled with affective responses of fear. This may affect interactions related to establishing friendships, how to treat colleagues, deciding who to live with, or who to employ. The impact is most evident through evidence of overt discrimination, such as in hiring practices (Hipes, Lucas, Phelan & White, 2016). However, they are equally felt through the quality of the interactions themselves and experiences in which people are left feeling that they are “facing an unaccepting world” (Goffman, 1963, p30), such as having any emotional reactions in the workplace treated as an indicator of mental health problems (Brohan, Evans-Lacko, Henderson, Murray, Slade & Thornicroft, 2014). Each of these areas play a vital role in people establishing a meaningful life and are protective factors when experiencing difficulties with mental wellbeing (Johnstone et al., 2018). Consequently, any additions to the cultural stock of images of violence associated with mental disorders, such as those found in the study, may contribute to undermining the opportunities people have of establishing and maintaining a robust and personally meaningful social life and managing the challenges that life presents. Further, healthcare workers are not immune to these forces and with the evidence of negative attitudes towards people with a diagnosis of personality disorder both within mental health (Dickens et al., 2016) and other health services (Hamilton et al., 2016) these processes may well play out in the quality of healthcare people receive.

The social construction of the meaning of personality disorder is likely to negatively impact on how people with the diagnosis re-evaluate their self as a result of the diagnosis. Self-stigma, which is associated with reduced self-esteem and self-efficacy, takes places when people accept the stereotypical beliefs about the diagnostic group that they are part of as an accurate reflection of reality (Corrigan & Rao, 2012). These findings may have a particular significance for people with this diagnosis, as they are typically characterised by a very negative self-concept, often associated with childhood experiences of abuse and trauma (Rusch et al., 2011). Therefore, messages about being

‘evil’ or a ‘monster’ may have a resonance with the internal images of self that people are struggling to manage and make them vulnerable to accepting these images of violence as a realistic presentation of who they are, or fear they may become. This may in turn increase people’s experiences of distress, contribute to reluctance to engage with services, and raise their vulnerability to accepting poor treatment from others as legitimate (Rusch et al., 2006).

4.1 What this study adds to the existing evidence.

The findings from this study build on the evidence that the press do, at times, draw on pejorative language in their representation of mental health (Murphy et al., 2013). This is not a UK specific concern (Pingani et al., 2018; Carpiniello et al., 2007) and this study adds to the global picture of this aspect of press reporting. Further, whilst previous studies have identified how this relates to schizophrenia (Clement & Foster, 2008) this study provides new understandings about the language used when the press have written about personality disorder. Moreover, rather than just identifying a list of words with a pejorative meaning, for example through press guidance (PCC, 2014) this study has provided a new understanding of how these words can be viewed in relation to each other and construct repetitive narratives about violence, which have been referred to as the *linguistic signatures of violence*.

4.2 Limitations.

The study does not provide findings about the actual impact on the readers over the 10 years that is reviewed, which is a limitation of studies in this field. However, the significance of the findings are supported through research that has found that the press have a direct impact on reader attitudes (Hoffner et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2016) and through the theoretical model of stigma.

Corpus linguistics, whilst providing a robust analysis of patterns of word usage does not identify contextual features such as where words are placed within articles or the visual images used. Future studies could incorporate corpus linguistics into research methods that places greater emphasis on contextual elements, such as frame analysis.

Whilst the use of corpus linguistic software helps to address issue such as the vulnerability of researchers being overly influenced by their first findings, the process does involve subjective decision making and therefore there is an inherent vulnerability to researcher bias (Baker, 2012). The review of the literature in the field helped to balance this risk.

This study examined how the language used may have contributed to the processes of stigmatisation, and whilst this aspect of the representation is important, it has not explored other aspects of the press’ accounts, some of which may have been empowering.

4.3 Implications for practice.

The implications for mental health nursing practice fall into four areas: public mental health, self-awareness, psycho-education and future research.

Stigma is recognised as an important public mental health issue, with a global agenda to challenge the stigma experienced by people with psychiatric diagnoses (Stuart, 2016). Mental health nurses can play a key role in challenging discrimination and supporting initiatives that present more rounded

understandings about mental health (Bates & Stickley, 2013). An awareness of the images and knowledge in society about different mental health disorders can support nurses to engage with this public health role.

There is evidence that some mental health nurses hold prejudicial attitudes towards people with a diagnosis of personality disorder (Dickens et al., 2016). Raising awareness of the multiple sources that influence nurses' knowledge and attitude can support greater self-awareness and improve practice. Exploration of media messages could also be part of training packages for mental health nurses to facilitate that process.

Self-stigma can have a significant negative impact on the lives of people with a mental health diagnosis. Mental health nurses have a role in challenging the processes of self-stigma, and evidence suggests that psycho-education can be an effective intervention (Mittal, Sullivan, Chekuri, Allee & Corrigan, 2012). An awareness of the types of images and messages that people may have received about the diagnosis of personality disorder can support nurses to challenge the negative stereotypes that people may have encountered and work to support people to make more rounded appraisals of themselves.

The use of corpus linguistics to analyse the media is under-developed within the field of mental health. The use of computer software to support the identification of linguistic patterns has been a rigorous and productive research method and future research could benefit from adopting this approach. Future research could incorporate the use of corpus linguistics as a component of a study that involves qualitative aspects of exploring media representations, e.g. frame analysis.

This study indicates that amongst this group of newspapers there has been relatively little written about discrete personality disorder diagnoses. This suggests that explorations of distinct diagnostic categories, e.g. borderline personality disorder, would need to include a wider range of newspapers.

4.4 Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the language used in the popular tabloid press in the UK over a ten year period was significantly characterised by messages of violence compared to accounts of a physical health condition. The repetition of these narratives may well contribute to the processes of stigmatisation that many people with this diagnosis experience and awareness of this can support mental health nurses to address this public mental health issue.

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